

to us the Lord's hand in this work: 44 baptisms, 45 endowments, 29 children sealed to parents, 16 marriage sealings. All of these from records that were supposedly 'all done.'

"Words cannot express the joy we have felt in the temple performing ordinances for our ancestors. Family relationships, some estranged since childhood, have been healed. Our extended families have also become involved. We have sent names to five different temples so that we could be united in helping to complete the temple work.

"We believe that it takes just one temple experience for one's ancestor to convince a person of the importance of this work. It is possible to become involved in this exciting work at any age. We're committed to it!"

In partnership with God

The Prophet Joseph Smith gave us this sober warning: "The earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link . . . between the fathers and the children. . . . For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect" (D&C 128:18).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Irony: the crust on the bread of adversity

What I now read is a most wintry verse indeed: "Nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith" (Mosiah 23:21).

This very sobering declaration of divine purpose ought to keep us on spiritual alert as to life's adversities.

Irony is the hard crust on the bread of adversity. Irony can try both our faith and our patience. Irony can be a particularly bitter form of such chastening because it involves disturbing incongruity. It involves outcomes in violation of our

In the councils of heaven before the world began, we made a solemn agreement with the Lord to assist in bringing to pass the eternal life of man. Elder John A. Widtsoe reminds us that the least of us, the humblest, is in partnership with the Almighty in achieving the purpose of the eternal plan of salvation. It is man's duty, his pleasure and joy, his labor and ultimately his glory. By that doctrine, with the Lord at the head, we become saviors on Mount Zion.

I bear witness that this work is true. I testify that we may anticipate a glorious reunion with our kindred family through the covenant blessings of the priesthood. I pray that we will heed the prophets and inherit the supreme joy which comes from performing this marvelous work of salvation, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder J. Richard Clarke, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

expectations. We see the best laid plans laid waste.

An individual is visibly and patiently prepared for an important role amid widespread expectation of his impending promotion or election. What follows, however, lasts only a very narrow moment in time. A political victory seems so near, recedes, and finally vanishes altogether.

Without meekness, such ironic circumstances are very difficult to manage.

In a marriage, a careless declaration hardens into a position, which position then becomes more important than communication or reconciliation. An intellectual stand is proudly and stubbornly

defended even in the face of tutoring truth or correcting counsel. Yet occasionally, as we all know, backing off is really going forward. Sometimes it takes irony to induce that painful but progressive posture.

The challenges of irony

With its inverting of our anticipated consequences, irony becomes the frequent cause of an individual's being offended. The larger and the more untamed one's ego, the greater the likelihood of his being offended, especially when tasting his portion of vinegar and gall.

Words then issue, such as, Why me? Why this? Why now? Of course, these words may give way to subsequent spiritual composure. Sometimes, however, such words precede bitter inconsolability, and then it is a surprisingly short distance between disappointment and bitterness.

Amid life's varied ironies, you and I may begin to wonder, Did not God notice this torturous turn of events? And if He noticed, why did He permit it? Am I not valued?

Our planning itself often assumes that our destiny is largely in our own hands. Then come intruding events, first elbowing aside, then evicting what was anticipated and even earned. Hence, we can be offended by events as well as by people.

Irony may involve not only unexpected suffering but also undeserved suffering. We feel we deserved better, and yet we fared worse. We had other plans, even commendable plans. Did they not count? A physician, laboriously trained to help the sick, now, because of his own illness, cannot do so. For a period, a diligent prophet of the Lord was an "idle witness" (Mormon 3:16). Frustrating conditions keep more than a few of us from making our appointed rounds.

Customized challenges are thus added to that affliction and temptation which Paul described as "common to man" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Jesus' example of coping with irony

In coping with irony, as in all things, we have an Exemplary Teacher in Jesus. Dramatic irony assaulted Jesus' divinity almost constantly.

For Jesus, in fact, irony began at His birth. Truly, He suffered the will of the Father "in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11). This whole earth became Jesus' footstool (see Acts 7:49), but at Bethlehem there was "no room . . . in the inn" (Luke 2:7) and "no crib for his bed" ("Away in a Manger," *Hymns*, no. 206).

At the end, meek and lowly Jesus partook of the most bitter cup without becoming the least bitter (see 3 Nephi 11:11; D&C 19:18-19). The Most Innocent suffered the most. Yet the King of Kings did not break, even when some of His subjects did unto Him "as they listed" (D&C 49:6). Christ's capacity to endure such irony was truly remarkable.

You and I are so much more brittle. For instance, we forget that, by their very nature, tests are unfair.

In heaven, Christ's lofty name was determined to be the only name on earth offering salvation to all mankind (see Acts 4:12; 2 Nephi 25:20; see also Abraham 3:27). Yet the Mortal Messiah willingly lived so modestly, even, wrote Paul, as a person "of no reputation" (Philippians 2:7).

What a contrast to our maneuverings over relative recognition and comparative status. How different, too, from the ways in which some among us mistakenly see the size and response of their audiences as the sole verification of their worth. Yet those fickle galleries we sometimes play to have a way of being constantly emptied. They will surely be empty at the Judgment Day, when everyone will be somewhere else, on their knees.

As the Creator, Christ constructed the universe, yet in little Galilee He was known merely as "the carpenter's son" (Matthew 13:55). In fact, the Lord of the universe was without honor even in His own Nazarene countryside. Though astonished at His teachings, his neighbors "were offended at him" (Mark 6:3). Even meek Jesus "marvelled because of their unbelief" (6:6).

As Jehovah, Jesus issued the original commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy, but during His mortal Messiahship, He was accused of violating the Sabbath, because on that day He gave healing rest to the afflicted (see John 5:8-16).

Can we absorb the irony of being hurt while trying to help? Having done good, when we are misrepresented, can we watch the feathers of false witness scatter on the winds?

Christ, long, long ago, as Creator, provided habitable conditions for us on this earth, generously providing all the essential atmospheric conditions for life, including essential water (see Moses 1:33; D&C 76:24). When he was aflame with thirst on the cross, "they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink" (Matthew 27:34; see also Psalm 69:21). Even so, there was no railing but a forgiving Christ (see Luke 23:34).

Christ was keenly aware of the constant irony: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Luke 9:58). He asked a treacherous Judas, "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48). And then there was the soulful lament, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37). Yet the repeated ritual of rejection was happening to Jesus all over again.

We all know what it is like not to be listened to, but how about disdain or even contempt? Furthermore, there is a difference between noticing rejection, as Jesus did, and railing against rejection, as He did not.

As the Creator, Christ fashioned "worlds without number" (Moses 1:33), yet with His fingers He fashioned a little clay from spittle, restoring sight to one blind man (see John 9:6). The Greatest meekly ministered "unto one of the least of these" (Matthew 25:40).

Do you and I understand that the significance of our service does not depend upon its scale?

Within hours Christ would rescue all mankind, yet he heard the manipulated

crowd cry, "Barabbas," thereby rescuing a life-taking murderer instead of life-giving Jesus (see Mark 15:7-15).

Can we remain true amid false justice? Will we do our duty against the roar of the crowd?

Instructive irony

As the Master Teacher, Christ tailored His tutoring, depending upon the spiritual readiness of His pupils. We see instructive irony even in some of these episodes.

To the healed leper returning with gratitude, Jesus' searching but simple query was, "Where are the [other] nine?" (Luke 17:17). To a more knowledgeable mother of Apostles, desiring that her two sons sit on Jesus' right and left hands, Jesus reprovably but lovingly said: "Ye know not what you ask. . . . [This] is not mine to give" (Matthew 20:22-23). To a grieving but rapidly maturing Peter, still burning with the memory of a rooster's crowing, thrice came the directive, "Feed my sheep," but also a signifying of "by what death" the great Apostle would later be martyred (John 18:25-27; 21:15-19). How much more demanding of Peter than of the leper!

Irony can strip corrosive pride

If a sudden, stabbing light exposes the gap between what we are and what we think we are, can we, like Peter, let that light be a healing laser? Do we have the patience to endure when one of our comparative strengths is called into question? A painful crisis may actually be the means of stripping corrosive pride off of that virtue.

To the humbly devout woman of Samaria who expected the Messiah, Jesus quietly disclosed, "I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:26). Yet an anxious Pilate "saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer" (John 19:9).

Can we remain silent when silence is eloquence — but may be used against us? Or will we murmur, just to let God know we notice the ironies?

The grand and glad irony

Yet, even with all the ironies, sad ironies, there is the grand and glad irony of Christ's great mission. He Himself noted that precisely because He was "lifted up upon the cross," He was able to "draw all men unto [him]," and being "lifted up by men," even so should "men be lifted up by the Father" (3 Nephi 27:14).

Be more loving

But how can we fortify ourselves against the irony in our lives and cope better when it comes?

By being more like Jesus, such as by loving more. "And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, [Why?] because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men" (1 Nephi 19:9).

Exercise self-denial

There are other significant keys for coping. "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Wise self-denial shrinks our sense of entitlement.

Live in thanksgiving

Another cardinal key is to "live in thanksgiving daily, for the many mercies and blessings which [God] doth bestow upon you" (Alma 34:38).

Life's comparatively few ironies are much more than offset by heaven's many mercies. We cannot count all our blessings every day, but we can carry over the reassuring bottom line from the last counting.

Do not heed temptations

Another vital way of coping was exemplified by Jesus. Though He suffered

all manner of temptations (see Alma 7:11), yet He "gave no heed unto them" (D&C 20:22). Unlike some of us, He did not fantasize, reconsider, or replay temptations. How is it that you and I do not see that while initially we are stronger and the temptations weaker, dalliance turns things upside down?

Manage irony with meekness

Jesus' marvelous meekness prevented any "root of bitterness" from "springing up" in Him (Hebrews 12:15). Ponder the Savior's precious words about the Atonement *after* He passed through it. There is no mention of the vinegar, no mention of the scourging, no mention of having been struck, no mention of having been spat upon. He does declare that He "suffer[ed] both body and spirit" in an exquisiteness which we simply cannot comprehend (D&C 19:18; see also 19:15).

Do the will of the Father

We come now to the last and most terrible irony of Jesus: His feeling forsaken at the apogee of His agony on Calvary. The apparent withdrawal of the Father's spirit then evoked the greatest soul cry in human history (see James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1916], p. 613). This deprivation had never happened to Christ before—never. Yet, thereby, Jesus became a fully comprehending Christ and was enabled to be a fully succoring Savior (see Alma 7:11–12). Moreover, even in that darkest hour, while feeling forsaken, Jesus submitted Himself to the Father.

No wonder the Savior tells us that the combined anguish in Gethsemane and on Calvary was so awful that He would have shrunk. Nevertheless, He finished His preparations (see D&C 19:18–19; 3 Nephi 11:11). The word *nevertheless* reflects deep, divine determination.

Furthermore, even after treading the winepress alone (see D&C 76:107), which ended in His stunning, personal triumph and in the greatest victory ever—

majestic Jesus meekly declared, "Glory be to the Father"! (D&C 19:19). This should not surprise us. In the premortal world, Jesus meekly volunteered to be our Savior, saying, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:2). Jesus was true to His word.

Glory be to the Father

Now, in closing, I humbly declare, "Glory be to the Father"—first, for rearing such an Incomparable Son. Second, "Glory be to the Father" for allowing His special Son to suffer and to be sacrificed for all of us. On Judgment Day, brothers and sisters, will any of us want to rush forward to tell our Father how we, as parents, suffered when we watched our children suffer?

Glory be to the Father, in the name of Him who can succor us amid all

our ironies and adversities (see Alma 7:11–12), even Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "A Marvelous Work" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us. The choir then sang "A Marvelous Work."

At the conclusion of my remarks, the choir will sing "Go Forth with Faith," and the benediction will be offered by Elder Hans B. Ringger, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

We shall then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Expression of optimism

We've had a wonderful morning where the Spirit of the Lord has been felt. I pray for a continuation of that Spirit.

A distinguished Protestant minister called on us the other day. In the course of our conversation he asked, "How do you feel about things?"

I replied, "I feel very optimistic. Things are happening in the world that are salutary and good. There are wars, yes. There is conflict, yes. But there also is much of peace among the nations of the earth. Something of tremendous significance is happening in the USSR and the People's Republic of China. There is growing freedom of expression and activity. A new openness is developing. I feel the spirit of Christ is brooding over the nations of the earth.

"Of course there are problems, many and serious. We sorrow over the plague of drugs with its bitter harvest. We deplore the terrible scourge of pornography. We grieve over the wicked flood of immorality and abortion. We are concerned with the epidemic of infidelity, of divorce

and broken homes. We are disturbed over the plight of the homeless and over stark hunger in many parts of the earth.

"But the remarkable thing is that so many people care. More than at any time in the history of the world, I believe, there are men and women by the tens of thousands who are reaching out with their strength and their substance to help those in distress. Modern science and medicine are doing wonders to alleviate pain and prolong life. There is greater fulfillment in the lives of millions.

"Concerning our own work—the that is, the work of this church—I feel even more optimistic. We are growing stronger. I hope our people are growing better. I think they are. There is increased activity, increased devotion, increased faithfulness."

I told him that two or three weeks earlier I was in an area where the percentage of members regularly attending their Sunday meetings was 70 to 75 percent. I think that is wonderful. In fact, I believe it is unique. These are wards of ordinary, faithful Latter-day Saints.